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## BILINGUAL SCHOOLS

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# ADDRESS

In the Legislature, on  
January 12th,  
1916

BY

**HON. R. S. THORNTON**

Minister of Education

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, WINNIPEG

FEBRUARY FIRST, 1916

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On June 30th, 1915, there were in operation altogether 2,727 departments in the several schools. Of these 1,042 are in the cities, towns and incorporated villages. The other 1,685 are mainly one and two-roomed rural schools. In this number there are 126 French bilingual schools, employing 234 teachers; 61 German bilingual schools employing 73 teachers, and 111 Ruthenian and Polish schools employing 114 teachers. So far no bilingual schools of any other nationalities have been established, but under these three classes we have 421 schools, which is exactly one-fourth of the rural schools in the Province. The enrolment in these schools numbers 16,720, while the total enrolment in the whole Province, including cities, is 100,963, so that the number of children enrolled in these rural bilingual schools is one-sixth of the total enrolment of the whole Province. In addition, there are several school districts where the population is largely, or entirely, of non-English origin, but where the teaching is entirely conducted in English.

During the Fall of the year a special inspection and report was made of all bilingual schools, and of schools which might be bilingual because of the presence of a number of non-English speaking people. The inspection was made by the regular staff of school inspectors and the results are now being tabulated, and a brief digest is being prepared for distribution.

## SECTION 258.

The provision in the Act which authorizes bilingual teaching in the public schools is Section 258. It is not the intention at the present moment to discuss the circumstances which called for its appearance in the Public Schools Act, but to show what is involved in this provision, and the actual results of its working in our educational system.

The clause reads "When ten of the pupils in any school speak the French language, or any language other than English as their native language, the teaching of such pupils shall be conducted in French, or such other language and English upon the bilingual system."

No similar clause appears in the School Act of any other Province of the Dominion. In British Columbia, in Prince Edward Island, in New Brunswick, no provision concerning the language to be used in the public schools is noted, and the teaching of any language other than English is not provided for.

In Ontario "Section 84," the Act provides that it is the duty of the teacher to use the English language in instruction and in all communications with the pupils, except where it is impracticable to do so by reason of the pupils not understanding English. This is further modified by regulation of the Department. Regulation No. 12 (3) provides:—

"In school sections where the French or German language prevails, the Board may, in addition to the Course of Study prescribed herein, require instruction to be given in French or German, reading, grammar and composition, to such pupils as are directed by their parents or guardians to study either of these langages."

and Regulation No. 17 provides that

"Where necessary in the case of French speaking pupils French may be used as the language of instruction and communication but such use of French shall not be continued beyond Form One, excepting that on the approval of the chief inspector it may also be used as the language of instruction and communication in the case of pupils beyond form one, who are unable to speak, and understand, the English language."

In Quebec the French and English systems are entirely separate, and in each case the medium of instruction is the mother tongue, but no provision is made for any other language.

In Nova Scotia there is no statutory provision governing the teaching language, but in the regulations of the Board of Public Instruction, the Acadian school regulations authorize the appointment of a bilingual visitor of schools in French speaking districts, a bilingual Normal training course for French speaking teachers, the use of authorized French readers, in certain districts, but no language except English shall be imperative on any pupil. Nova Scotia is the only Province in which the word "bilingual" is used in the Statutes or Regulations, outside of Manitoba.

In Alberta and Saskatchewan the provisions are identical, having been continued from the old North West Territories days. The section is as follows:—

Section 136, page 45 (Alberta).

"All schools shall be taught in the English language, but it shall be permissible for the board of any district to cause a primary course to be taught in the French language.

"The board of any district may, subject to the regulations of the department, employ one or more competent persons to give instruction in any language other than English in the school of the district to all pupils whose parents or guardians have signified a willingness that they should receive the same, but such course of instruction shall not supersede, or in any way interfere with, the instruction by the teacher in charge of the school as required by the Regulations of the Department and this Ordinance.

"The board shall have power to raise such sums of money as may be necessary to pay the salary of such instructor, and all costs, charges, and expenses of such course of instruction shall be collected

by the board by a special rate to be imposed upon the parents or guardians of such pupils as take advantage of the same."

From these extracts it will be seen that some of the Provinces recognize no other language than English, and some others give a partial recognition to the French language. Ontario gives limited recognition to German and French, but in Manitoba alone is equal standing given to any other language.

## ANY OTHER LANGUAGE

The next point to be noted is the sweeping character of the provisions of this section. It says, the teaching of such pupils *shall* be conducted in French, or such other language, and English. The status given to the language is not merely that of a subject to be taught as an educational accomplishment as for instance the teaching of French, German, Latin, or Greek, in the school curriculum, but under certain conditions the other tongue takes its stand equally with English as the medium of instruction. English is the language of the country, yet the other tongue, under the condition of ten children in any school district, receives official recognition as the language of instruction, and this recognition is accorded to every language that may be spoken in the Province, whether the people speaking it are British subjects or not.

The Dominion census of 1911 gives the total population of the Province of Manitoba as 455,614, of which number 266,415 are classed as of British origin. This is a little over fifty-eight per cent., the other forty-two per cent. being represented by other nationalities. When we take the three prairie Provinces together we find those of British origin number about fifty-three and a half per cent. of the total. In the Province of Manitoba there are named some twenty different nationalities, each one of which has an equal right with any other nationality to demand under this clause bilingual teaching in its native tongue.

The ten divisions leading in numbers are:—

Austro Hungarian .....	39,665
German (including Mennonites) .....	34,530
French.....	30,944
Polish.....	12,310
Jewish.....	10,741
Russian.....	8,841
Indians (natives).....	7,876
Scandinavians.....	6,419
Dutch.....	2,853
Unclassified.....	19,647

While all of these different nationalities are equally entitled to bilingual teaching the demand therefor has come chiefly, but not entirely, from the first four mentioned. The others have generally been content and satisfied with wholly English teaching in the schools.

## SHALL BE.

It is next to be noted that the clause is imperative in its language. The words are "Shall be." In communities of mixed nationalities each one has as much right to recognition as any other,

providing it has the necessary ten children in school. If the clause were given effect to as it stands it would produce utter confusion. In schools where there are three nationalities having the requisite ten children it would be necessary to divide the school into three parts, each having a teacher of its own. The results in actual working are that the language of the majority, whatever it may happen to be, is recognized, and the several minorities have to submit. There are thirty-six schools which could demand to be taught in two languages besides English, and five schools in three languages besides English.

Here are some examples:—In Bachman school district the enrollment is 27 Poles, 10 Germans and 7 Ruthenians. Here the Polish and German languages would have to be recognized, and the Ruthenians would have to submit.

In Bradley school district there are 36 Germans, 25 Poles and 25 Ruthenians. Here there would have to be three separate schools to meet the requirements of the clause.

In Janowski school district there are 11 Ruthenians, 5 Poles and 7 Russians. Here the Poles and Russians would have to submit to the Ruthenians.

In Elk Creek school district there are 47 Germans, 18 Icelanders and 2 Norwegians. Here the Icelanders and Norwegians who always desire to be taught in English, would have to accept a bilingual teacher in German.

In Kelner school district there are 40 Poles, 31 Ruthenians and 15 Finlanders. In this case three separate schools would be necessary.

In all of these cases the teaching at the present time is being done in the English language, but in two of them, Janowski and Kelner, an endeavor is being made to have a bilingual teacher substituted. The inspector reports that in Kelner a section of the school board demands that the teacher teach a foreign language, threatening him with dismissal if he refuses. That would mean the Ruthenians and Finlanders would have to submit to a Polish bilingual teacher, or insist on having teachers of their own.

From these various examples it will be seen that the clause not only puts English in the second place, but does not protect the other languages, only giving a place of priority to the language which, for the time being, is in numerical ascendancy.

In addition to these thirty-six schools already mentioned there are one hundred and ten others where the admixture of nationalities is quite as marked, only the minorities for the time being have not the necessary ten children. The arrival or departure of a single family may alter the situation at any time, and the majority may, in turn, be deprived of its precarious privilege. In nearly one fourth of the schools which are actually conducted on the bilingual plan we find French, German, Polish or Ruthenian children receiving instruction in some other non-English tongue, but not in their own.

## IN THE CITIES

In the cities the situation which would be created would be still worse. In Strathcona school in the north end of Winnipeg there are enrolled 1,237 pupils, of whom only 97 are children of English speaking parents, and the remainder represent twelve different nation-

alities, Jew, German, Ruthenian, Polish, Russian, Bohemian, French, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Icelandic and Italian.

In the Aberdeen school we have a similar condition.

At Brandon in one room we have 12 Germans, 7 English, 5 Galicians, 4 Hebrews, 3 Poles, and 3 Russians. In this case the Germans could demand a bilingual teacher, and the other five nationalities would have to submit. Needless to say they are all taught in English, and the report states that they speak English fluently and correctly, except two, who suffer from physical defect.

No serious or persistent endeavor has been made to have the bilingual system introduced in the schools of the City of Winnipeg, but on four different occasions petitions have been presented to the School Board asking for bilingual teaching, and might be again if the clause is kept in force. The languages on whose behalf these petitions have been presented are German, Ruthenian, and Polish, and if this were granted to these three it would have to be granted to every one of the numerous nationalities represented in the schools.

In giving effect to the provisions of this clause, from 1903 to 1908 the Department ruled that a school could not be bilingual without its consent and on application being made the officials enquired carefully to see that all necessary conditions were complied with, but in 1908 a new policy was adopted by the late administration, and the whole question was left to be decided by the trustees in each district. Districts thus became bilingual sometimes through the action of the trustees acting on their own judgment, and sometimes by way of a petition of the ratepayers. The result has been that in almost every district of mixed nationalities a prolonged and continuous struggle takes place to gain control of the trustee board. Here are some examples:

In January, 1914, a number of ratepayers in the school district of Highland, No. 1628, petitioned the trustees to employ a bilingual teacher speaking Polish and English. In May, 1914, a petition was presented to the same school board asking for the employment of a teacher who could speak Gaelic and English. The trustees have, so far, been unable to find a teacher speaking Gaelic, Polish, and English, and have continued to operate the school as a straight English school.

Some years ago the school district of St. Francois de Salle, St. Norbert, was a French bilingual school. The Ruthenians began to settle in the district, and as soon as they had a majority at the annual meeting they secured control of the school board. They wanted to employ a Ruthenian bilingual teacher instead of a French bilingual teacher, and they had the necessary number of children, having some 40 or 50 of school age. The French still had some 15 children attending the school, and the two factions came to an agreement to build a two-roomed school, one room being operated as a French bilingual school, the other as a Ruthenian bilingual school. A year or so later the French room was closed.

The school district of Donald, situated along the Red River, north of Winnipeg, is now a Ruthenian and Polish bilingual school. In earlier years this was a Scotch settlement, operating an English school. When the first request for a Polish, or Ruthenian teacher was made, the trustees had a counter claim presented by the Scotch people asking for a bilingual school with Gaelic, and the trustees continued to operate with an English teacher until the settlement had become almost entirely Polish and Ruthenian.

The school at Sifton was largely an English school, but after a while the Ruthenians had the necessary numbers in attendance to demand a bilingual school, and the problem was solved by forming another school district, so that there are now two schools centering at the little village, one English speaking and one bilingual. Instead of this situation there ought to be a good graded school.

In October, 1915, a petition was presented to the trustees of the Fisher Branch school district asking for a French bilingual teacher, and shortly afterwards another petition asking for a Ruthenian bilingual teacher. There the matter rests for the present.

The school of Libau has been taught for some years as a German bilingual school. Recently a number of Polish people have settled in the district. In August, 1915, a request was presented by the trustees asking for an extension of the teacher's certificate, and a day later the Polish settlers petitioned for a Polish bilingual teacher. Each nationality has the requisite number of children. We have succeeded in persuading them to accept an English speaking teacher.

The secretary of Wisla school district, on October 28th, 1915, wrote asking for a teacher who could teach Polish, Ruthenian, and English.

From these instances it will be seen that each district becomes, in succession, a storm centre, and peace returns because one or the other section is driven out. In most cases, as instanced, the English people are driven out of the settlement, and those who cannot afford to move have to stay and endure conditions. Many letters of protest and appeal come from people in these districts.

In December last a ratepayer in the school district of Saint Martin wrote as follows: "The school has been opened the first of this month with a German bilingual teacher. I have three children of school age and I am not in a position to send them into the city for education."

From the school district of River Ranch a ratepayer writes: "We had a good teacher until last year. Now the trustees have hired a Ruthenian bilingual teacher. The teacher is not really qualified to do the work. Have not sent our children to school since the holidays. It is giving the English a poor show in their own country."

So far as I have been able to judge, large numbers of the non-English speaking people want to be educated entirely in English, and if left to themselves would readily acquiesce. The officials of the Department have generally endeavored to minimize the evils of this clause, and have frequently been successful in persuading the people to have the school taught entirely in English. This has happened more generally in mixed settlements, especially where the contending nationalities are fairly evenly balanced, but outside influences seem to step into a community and rouse the people to assert themselves under this clause which, being mandatory, leaves the Department no option.

### Process of Elimination.

During the last few months there has been a steady movement towards the elimination of teachers who have been teaching English entirely, whether of British nationality or otherwise.

Demetrius Rostocky was engaged to teach the school in Zamek district. When he began work the Polish element demanded that he teach Polish. The Ruthenian element wanted him to teach Ruthenian, and the Swedish element wanted him to teach Swedish. These various factions could not agree upon the question of straight English in the school, and when Mr. Rostocky pointed out that he could not teach all these languages, as he did not have time, he was invited to leave.

Leon Brown went out to teach Van Dusen school, but he was requested by some of the trustees to teach Polish, and the following day the demand was made that he teach Ruthenian. When he took charge of the school he began teaching the children to sing "God save the King" and one trustee immediately objected to this. In a very short time the people practically withdrew their children from the school and stated that they did not want a Russian teacher, and that they could have a bilingual teacher *because the law allowed it.* Mr. Brown speaks Polish and Ruthenian, but insisted that he should teach only English, with the result that at the end of the first month he withdrew because he had only one or two scholars coming to school.

Mr. A. Woloszynski wrote to the Department on November 23rd, 1915, "The people of Zora school district bother me incessantly to teach their children Polish and Ruthenian language. As far as my knowledge is concerned they have been inspired by the people from Sapton school district (three miles from my school) because the teacher from that school is teaching Polish and Ruthenian three times a week. Have I the right to teach my children Polish and Ruthenian language, and how many hours per day?"

The three districts above quoted are located Zamek, in unorganized territory at the Whitemouth River, east of Winnipeg, Zora, in the Municipality of Springfield, and Van Dusen in unorganized territory north of Winnipeg, between the Lakes.

This movement is going on in different localities, but most marked in the Municipality of Mossey River, north of Lake Dauphin. In this Municipality there are three school districts, Wieden, North Lake, and Janowski, all of which up till now have been taught by English speaking teachers.

During the summer of 1915, in June, difficulties began in Wieden school district, which settlement is composed of Russians who desire English teaching, and Ruthenians who desire bilingual teaching. The usual disturbances to obtain control of the trustee board arose, and the matter reached a climax in September last when some of the ratepayers proceeded to the school, took down the flag, put it inside the school, and locked the door. This school has been placed in charge of the Official Trustee.

The movement next appeared in North Lake district, about ten miles distant. This school is solidly Ruthenian. On November 30th, 1915, a special meeting was held for the purpose of electing a trustee to fill a vacancy caused by death. A new trustee was elected, and immediately after a discussion arose to dismiss the English speaking teacher who has been there since 1913, and has been doing good work.

In December, 1915, in Janowski, the same disturbance has arisen between Ruthenian and Russian sections. The Ruthenian section is striving to get control of the trustee board so that they may have a bilingual teacher put in to supersede the English teacher.

In consequence of information supplied to the Department by the Inspector, and others, Mr. Stratton made a special investigation in these districts, and a letter has been received dated December 22nd from a reliable informant to this effect:

"The teacher at Moose Bay school No. 1459 says the trustees have informed him that they intend to get a bilingual teacher in that district after the New Year, and in the event of not being able to get one, will close the school-house for at least six months." This school is situated next to the following school districts "Janowski," "Wieden" and "North Lake."

## TEACHERS' CERTIFICATES.

The right to bilingual teaching led to a demand for the training of bilingual teachers. As a result, we have at the present time, the regular teachers' certificates, third, second, and first class professional, granted after the regular Normal training, and in addition the following, all authorized by the Advisory Board:—

French bilingual certificates good only in French-English Schools.
German        "        "        "        "        German-English        "
Polish        "        "        "        "        Polish-English        "
Ruthenian    "        "        "        "        Ruthenian-English    "

These certificates should represent the regular English standing, *plus* the additional language. In reality they represent the regular standing *minus*—being short either on the academic, or on the professional side.

Candidates for French bilingual certificates study the English language, but do not write any examination on English grammar, English composition, or English literature.

Candidates for German bilingual certificates write English grammar and English composition at the Entrance Examination for promotion to the High School, but may omit the examinations in these subjects for a Third Class certificate. It is gratifying to note that a considerable number of them, each year, voluntarily write on the papers, showing their desire to measure up to the regular English standard.

The Polish and Ruthenian students must take the regular examinations along with the English speaking pupils in the schools, but are admitted to Normal School after completing one year of High School work (Grade IX), instead of two years (Grade X).

So far no demand has been made by the other nationalities for bilingual teacher training, but they have the same right under the Act as those who have already received it.

## INSPECTION

Up to the present time the French bilingual schools have been inspected only by French Inspectors, who are bilingual. The German bilingual schools have been inspected by one speaking English and German. The Polish and Ruthenian bilingual schools have been inspected by the regular English speaking Inspectors, each man taking charge of any that are situated in his division.

The practice, so far as the German bilingual schools are concerned, has been in vogue since 1890, or 1891. So far as the French bilingual schools are concerned, it began very shortly after the passing of the Act of 1897, and no other inspection has been made in these schools until made under this Government last Fall. Several requests have been made to the Department to have Polish and Ruthenian School Inspectors appointed.

## TEXT BOOKS.

Bilingual teaching requires the preparation of bilingual text books, and we have here bilingual text books in French, in German, in Polish, and in Ruthenian, all authorized by the Advisory Board, and any other language is equally entitled to the same consideration.

## BILINGUAL TEACHING NOT NECESSARY.

Bilingual teaching is not necessary as a means of education. The English language is being taught to non-English children, and education is being carried on successfully where straight English teaching is adopted, not only by teachers who speak it as the mother tongue, but by those who have acquired it. This is true not only in the cities and towns, where the surrounding conditions and associations assist in the work, but it is also true in the rural districts of solid non-English nationalities.

Mr. Sisler, Principal of Strathcona School, in North Winnipeg, than whom no man in the Province is better qualified to speak with authority on this subject, writes:

"As to the value of bilingual teaching, I am absolutely opposed to it so far as children are concerned. They should learn English as they learn their mother tongue, through actions, objects, and pictures, and the association of the proper words with ideas presented by them.

"With adult pupils having a large vocabulary in their own language, and a knowledge of its grammar, the skilful teacher knowing the two languages can help the pupil. In actual practice, however, I find from experience in the night schools that the foreign speaking teacher usually gets poorer results than does the English speaking teacher, the reason being that he makes so much use of the foreign language that the pupils do not learn to think in English.

"I base my conclusions on twelve years' experience in foreign schools, part of which was gained in a country district where not a word of English was spoken outside of the school room."

Mr. Sisler's opinion is entitled to great consideration. He has for several years been Principal of this school, with many varied nationalities to deal with, with all sorts and conditions of pupils from a child who comes in at an early age, up to the child who comes in at ten or twelve years of age, and has never been at school previously, and the results from the educational point of view are excellent.

In the North Ward school at Portage la Prairie similar results are being obtained. The community is almost as much isolated as any rural district. Ruthenian children of six and seven who have scarcely heard a word of English until entering school are being splendidly taught by an English teacher, who knows not a word of Ruthenian.

In the Province at large there are 83 schools where bilingual teaching might be undertaken, but is not. Of these 83 schools 37 are taught by teachers whose mother tongue is not English. The reports of the Inspectors dealing with these 83 schools almost invariably show the children are able to converse easily and readily in English. A number of these are dealt with in the digest already referred to. A striking contrast is afforded between two schools in the same school district.

In the district of Laurier, near Marquette, is a bilingual school and one which was formerly bilingual, but has been taught wholly in English for two years. In the former there are 20 pupils (17 French and 3 English) none of whom are above Grade IV. The Inspector's report says "In Grade I the teaching of English has not been attempted. In Grade II the pupils are able to read a little, but had hardly any knowledge of the subject matter read. In Grades III and IV progress is shown, but pupils converse neither easily nor fluently." In the latter there are 40 pupils (27 French and 13 English) and the same Inspector reports "Excellent progress is being made in English, the pupils in the higher Grades converse quite fluently. This school has an Entrance class of four, and a high standard of efficiency has been reached."

Perhaps the best comment on such a contrast is to be found in a report by ex-Inspector Potvin who, on a visit to a rural school wrote to this effect "That the teacher has succeeded well in overcoming the difficulties presented in conducting a class of this size in which a large number of Grades in two courses, one bilingual and the other English, are to be found."

Whatever opinions there may be regarding bilingual teaching in Graded schools it should be evident that the one-roomed school has enough to do without the complication of bilingual teaching.

There are several nationalities that have never asked for bilingual privileges, and do not want them. The Icelanders have been in this Province for forty years. They have never dreamed of asking bilingual privileges, either before or after the insertion of Clause 258 in the Act. They realized that the door of opportunity was open to them everywhere, provided they equipped themselves to enter.

## GENERAL RESULTS.

These are the results obtained in about twenty years after the passing of this clause, and barely ten years after it has been in active operation. The condition is becoming more aggravated, and will continue to do so as long as the clause stands in the Act as a weapon by which reactionary forces can urge their demands. There should be one common school teaching the things which are common to all, and leaving to individual effort those matters which are of private concern. There should be one standard of teacher eligible

to teach in all schools of the Province. There should be a Normal training to which all teachers should measure up. There should be a school Inspector eligible to inspect every school under the Government. That is the ideal which, during all these years, seems to have been lost sight of. It will take many a long year to undo present conditions. The transition towards new conditions must of necessity be accomplished gradually, but we can set our faces in the right direction, and patiently, steadily, and considerately travel towards the goal.

It is necessary to deal with this law both in our own interests, and in the interests of those who have come to make their homes with us with the purpose of becoming a part of this nation. The first essential to individual progress in any land is to know the language of the country. In an English speaking country, as this is, a knowledge of English is more necessary than a knowledge of arithmetic. No matter what a man's attainments may be the doors of opportunity are closed to him if he has not a knowledge of English, the common tongue. The teachers of non-English birth, many of whom have been bravely and conscientiously contending against adverse conditions will, with better educational standing, no longer be stamped sectionally, but will have a wider opportunity and a broader field in which to labor.

### THE CHILDREN OF TODAY.

A grave injustice is being done to the children who do not receive a satisfactory education in English. Without that knowledge they grow up under a continuous handicap. We wish to give them the same consideration as is accorded to our own children, to fit them to earn their way through life, and to take their places as citizens in our Canadian nationality.

This question must be dealt with looking *forward*, not *backward*. Each generation must take its responsibility, and act in the spirit of its own times yet ever watchful of the result to succeeding generations. We are building today for the Canada of tomorrow, and our common school is one of the most important factors in the work.

In this Dominion we are building up, under the British flag, a new nationality. We come from many lands and cast in our lot, and from these various factors there must evolve a new nationality which shall be simply *Canadian* and *British*.